



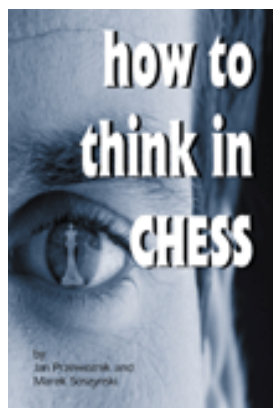
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COLUMNISTS

Opening Lanes

Gary Lane



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***Opening Lanes** is based in large part on readers' questions. Do you have a question about a particular opening line? Baffled by a branch of the Benoni or Budapest? Submit your questions (with you full name and country of residence please) and perhaps Gary will reply in his next **Chess Cafe** column...*

Yes, I have a question for Gary!

Novelty on Move 19

Each month I try to look at a variety of openings and by far the biggest demand concerns ideas that are played after a handful of moves. This is because there is a good chance that it can be played without an opponent springing a surprise. However, there are other players who devote their spare time learning lots of games only to become unstuck after rattling out a whole series of moves. Therefore, I also like the challenge of trying to find out the truth behind a main line even when a novelty is after a whopping 19 moves!

Evan Rosenberg, New York, USA sends this message: "I have recently taken the Semi-Slav under my belt after experimenting with many replies to 1 d4. So I felt obliged to memorize all the opening theory in the Botvinnik system. Never having faced 5 Bg5 in a tournament before, I decided to risk playing the line against IM Jay



Bonin. We played all well-known moves until he unexpectedly played 19 Qd4 after 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 e6 5 Bg5 dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 Bh4 g5 9 Nxc5 hxg5 10 Bxc5 Nbd7 11 g3 Bb7 12 Bg2 Qb6 13 exf6 0-0-0 14 0-0 c5 15 d5 b4 16 Na4 Qb5 17 a3 exd5 18 axb4 cxb4. I'm familiar with Be3 in this position, and I responded in the same fashion with 19. ... Nc5, but is there a more appropriate way to respond to this move?"

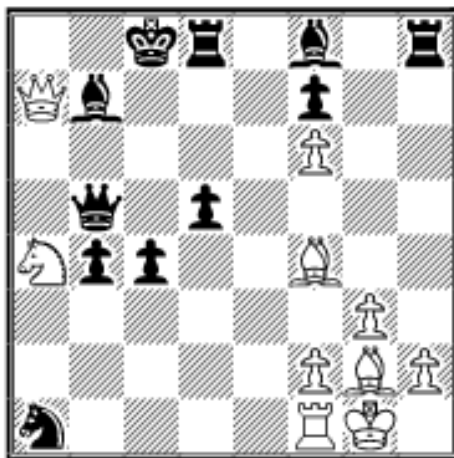
I would be interested in seeing more of your game to see how White handled the position. I suspect the inspiration for 19 Qd4 comes from the following game that first came to prominence when it was featured in *Informator* 56. In his good book on the Semi-Slav published in 1994, Peter Wells repeats the analysis and approves the move without finding anything wrong with it. Naturally, he cannot extensively look at every single sub-variation but this might be a clue to why it is still being played. The reason why you might not know it is that there is now a huge amount of theory associated with the main line and it is difficult for an author to include everything. This is why the well regarded book on the opening by Matthew Sadler relies on general advice and does not mention the obscure 19 Qd4. Lets have a look at what all the fuss is about:

***Juraj Nikolac-Sergey Kishnev* Munich 1992**
1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 e6 5 Bg5 dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 Bh4 g5 9 Nxc5 hxg5 10 Bxc5 Nbd7 11 exf6 Bb7 12 g3 c5 13 d5 Qb6 14 Bg2 0-0-0 15 0-0 b4 16 Na4 Qb5 17 a3 exd5 18 axb4 cxb4 19 Qd4!? (See Diagram)



The queen move looks a logical choice because it attacks the a-pawn and seems to hasten the attack. White has various possibilities available such as 19 Qg4 and Re1. I quite like the look of 19

Be3, which Shirov used to great effect in an Internet simultaneous game when he beat Lampes. That game went 19...Nc5 20 Qg4+ Kc7 (20...Rd7!? should be considered) 21 Bf4+ Kc6 22 Nxc5 Bxc5 23 Rfe1 Rd7 24 b3 (White wishes to open line son the queenside to allow his pieces to attack the black king) 24...c3 25 Bf1 Qb6 26 Ra2 Qd8 27 Rae2 Kb6 (if 27...Qxf6? then 28 Be5 wins] 28 Re7 Rxe7 29 fxe7 Bxe7 30 Qe2! (The twin threats of Qb5+ and Qxe7 seals Black's fate) 30...Bd6 31 Qb5+ Kc7 32 Qc5+ Bc6 33 Qxa7+ Bb7 34 Qc5+ Bc6 35 Bxd6+ 1-0. **19...Nc5 20 b3 Nxb3 21 Qxa7 Nxa1 22 Bf4!!** (See Diagram)



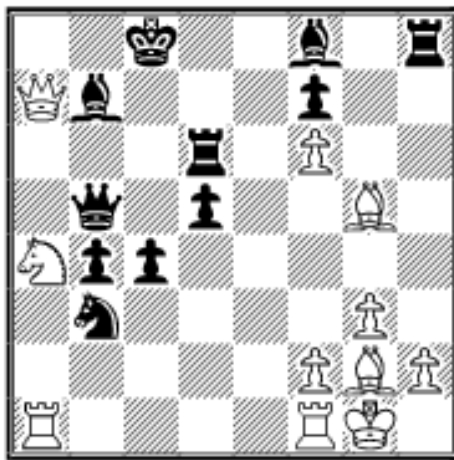
Nikolac is rightly proud of this star move and I am happy to repeat his use of double exclamation marks. He points out that the alternative 22 Rxa1 fails to work after 22...Kc7! 23

Be3 Ra8 24 Bb6+ Kc6 when the white queen

has run out of decent squares. 22...Kd7 Or 22...Bd6 23 Nb6+ Qxb6 24 Qxb6 Bxf4 25 Rxa1 Bd6 26 Ra7 Rd7 27 Rxb7 is winning. It is worth pointing out that 22...Rd6 is not much good here because White wins with 23 Bxd6 Bxd6 24 Nb6+ Kc7 25 Nxd5+. **23 Bxd5!** This is Nikolac's suggested improvement on the actual game and it is a good one. He in fact tried 23 Nb6+ but the attack did not work out well upon 23...Kc6 24 Nxd5 Rxd5 25 Rd1 Rhh5! 26 Qb8?! Qa5! 27 Qxf8 Kb6 when it was Black who had the advantage **23...Qxd5 24 Nb6+ Kc6 25 Nxd5 Rxd5 26 Rxa1 Bh6! 27 Qe3! Bxf4 28 Qxf4** with victory in sight.

Now the assumption might be based on that performance that 19 Qd4 is a forgotten gem that is set to storm the chess world. Well, I suspect that is not quite the end of the matter. My first question must be if that is so good how come Ivanchuk, Shirov and Van Wely all failed to spot it and chose other options? I spent some time trying to look up in the books a refutation with no luck so in the end I decided to take a closer look at the Nikolac game.

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 e6 5 Bg5 dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 Bh4 g5 9 Nxg5 hxg5 10 Bxg5 Nbd7 11 exf6 Bb7 12 g3 c5 13 d5 Qb6 14 Bg2 0-0-0 15 0-0 b4 16 Na4 Qb5 17 a3 exd5 18 axb4 cxb4 19 Qd4! Nc5 20 b3 Nxb3 21 Qxa7 and now I suggest Black should play **21...Rd6!** (See Diagram)



It is natural for Black to grab material with 21...Nxa1 but I think that this move stops White from pursuing the attack. Now the obvious 22 Ra2 runs into 22...Ra6 23 Qe3 Rxa4 with an easy

win. Therefore, **22 Bf4** seems to be critical but the quiet **22...Qa6!** appears to spoil White's fun leaving Black with a winning position.

Of course, if any reader has seen an improvement for White then please let me know and if not lets form a queue to play Jay Bonin in this line as Black.

Selmi Omar from **Tunisia** has been studying the Dragon and is worried about sacrificing his pieces. He writes “

I would like to know more about this Sicilian dragon sacrifice: 1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 0-0-0 Ne5 11 Bb3 Rc8 12 Bh6 Bxh6 13 Qxh6 and now 13...Rxc3 is it correct? I want to know because White can force this variation.”

It never easy to give up material in the opening but you chose to play the Dragon, which is usually a tactical battle. I think when you look at more games involving the Dragon you will be more confident of sacrificing the rook for the queen's knight on c3 because it is an important concept of the opening. It cam seem rather daunting to give up the material but everyone new to the opening takes time to understand it. I

would say that in general the main reasons to sacrifice the exchange is to wreck the queenside pawns, weaken control of the e4 pawn, slow down White's kingside attack by deflecting pieces to the defence of the queenside and accelerate Black's attacking opportunities. The next game indicates some of Black's possibilities after sacrificing the exchange.

***Michal Novak-Lukas Mezera Czech Team
Championship 1997***

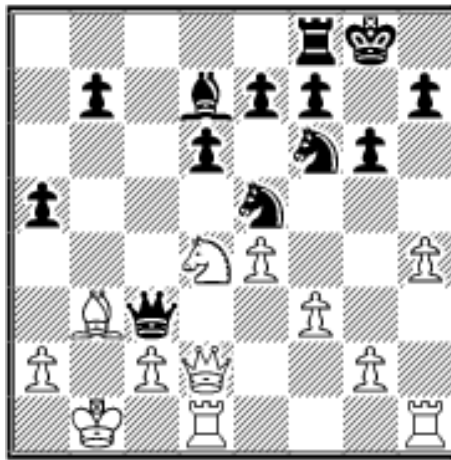
1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Bc4 Nc6 9 Qd2 Bd7 10 0-0-0 Rc8 11 Bb3 Ne5 12 Bh6 This move has long been considered inferior because Black can lure the white queen away from the defence of the queen's knight. Also possible is 12 g4 when M.Krivokapic-M. Savic, Herceg Novi 2002 continued 12...b5 13 Bh6 Bxh6 14 Qxh6 with a similar position to the main game and allowing Black to strike back with the traditional sacrifice upon 14...Rxc3. The game concluded: 15 bxc3 a5 16 Nf5 Bxf5 17 gxf5 a4 18 fxg6 hxg6 19 f4 axb3 20 axb3 (or 20 fxe5 bxa2 21 Kb2 Ng4 22 Qh4 Nxe5 23 Kxa2? Qa5+ 24 Kb1 Ra8 25 Kc1 Nc4 with mate to follow) 20...Nxe4 21 fxe5 Qa5 0-1. **12...Bxh6 13 Qxh6** (See Diagram)



13...Rxc3 14 bxc3 Qa5 15 h4 White is eager to get on with the attack despite his queenside being severely disrupted. For instance: 15 Kb2 (15 Kb1 Rc8 16 Rhe1 Nc4 17 Bxc4 Rxc4 18 Nb3 Qb5 19

Rd4 left Black struggling to justify the sacrificed material in T.Rozsnyai-D.Boros, Budapest 2002.

But Black can improve with the simple 16...Qxc3 15...Rc8 16 Qe3 Qb6 17 Ka1 a5 (a key idea to put pressure on the light-squared bishop) 18 Nf5 Qxe3 19 Nxe3 Rxc3 20 Nd5 Nxd5 21 Bxd5 b5 22 Kb2 b4 0-1 A.Conrady-D.Velimirovic, The Hague 1966. **15...Qxc3 16 Kb1** If 16 Ne2 then Black can triumph with 16...Nd3+! when 17 Rxd3 Qa1+ 18 Kd2 Qxh1 wins. **16...a5!** Mezera reacts sharply by threatening a5-a4 to put pressure on the b3 bishop. **17 Qd2?** (See Diagram)



It seems to make sense to offer to exchange queens in a bid to thwart the queenside attack. However, White has missed a tactical idea. Therefore, perhaps 17 h5 should be considered.

17...Qxd2 18 Rxd2 a4 19 Bd5 e6 20 f4 The position becomes somewhat clearer because the bishop on d5 has nowhere to hide because 21 Bxb7 runs into 21...Rb8 pinning the bishop. **20...exd5 21 fxe5 Nxe4 22 Rdd1 Nc3+ 23 Kc1 Nxd1 24 Rxd1 dxe5 25 Nf3 e4 0-1.**

I hope this game will inspire you to further investigate the Dragon.

Jonathan Adams from **Dee Why, Sydney, Australia** writes 'I have played as Black 4 games against an opponent who has by transposition gone in for an unusual line of the Exchange Variation, and he has generally come

out of the opening with a slight but annoying initiative. The latest game commenced: 1 e4 c6 2 Nc3 d5 3 exd5 (which my books say should be equal on general principles but with no detailed analysis) 3...cxd5 4 d4. Here I have twice essayed 4...Bf5. Latest game continued 5 Nf3 a6 (do I have to spend a tempo to keep him out of b5?) 6 Bd3 and White has a free game with the better development. I played 6...Bxd3 (may be wrong) 7 Qxd3 and he came out better after 7...Nc6 8 a3 e6 9 0-0 Bd6 10 Re1. After my 10...Nge7 I don't like the look of 11 Ng5 and I have to watch for the threat of sacrificing the rook on e6. My question is what should Black play against this 4 d4 line, in what should be an innocuous Exchange Variation? If we compare the main line Exchange Variation (1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 cxd5 exd5 4 Bd3), should not the fact that ...Bf5 cannot usually be played on move 4 but can in the line in question be in Black's favour? So is 4...Bf5 ok, and what is the correct follow-up to it?

Well let's have a closer look at the line that you don't like:

1 e4 c6 2 Nc3 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 d4 A dull choice by White who obviously wants a solid position and wishes to avoid any traps in the opening. A difference in lines starting with 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 cxd5 exd5 4 Bd3 is that White does not have the option of c2-c3 to strengthen the d4 pawn and keep out Black's queen's knight. And c2-c4. **4...Bf5 5 Nf3 a6?! I think in your game you have already pinpointed your initial error of playing this move, which neglects development.**

However, this seems to have little effect on the game due to White's feeble opening. Instead 5...Nc6 is a natural choice. **6 Bd3 Bxd3 7 Qxd3 Nc6 8 a3 e6 9 0-0 Bd6 10 Re1 Nge7 11 Ng5** (See Diagram)

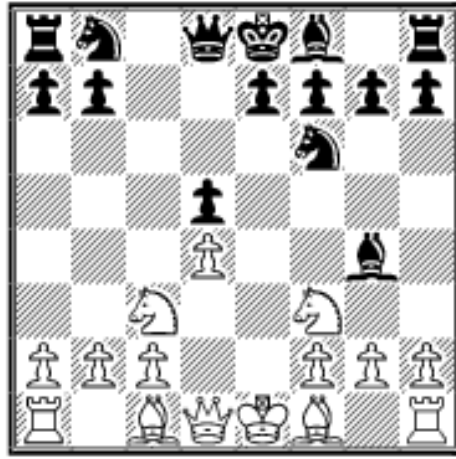


I would considered the position roughly even and if anything Black might even have an edge. After **11...h6** the sacrifices on e6 do not work so that **12 Nf3** and now **12...0-0** should offer you decent chances.

I suspect the position is probably just too quiet for your tastes and you should consider a line that offers more tactical chances.

Reiner Thalmann-Michael Egner Eppingen **1988**

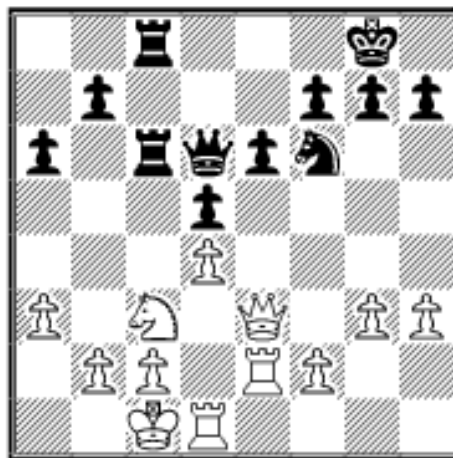
1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 Nc3 Nf6 I think for practical purposes you should delay developing your queenside bishop intending to eventually bring it out on g4. 5 Nf3 If 5 Bd3 then 5...Bg4 is a reasonable choice when 6 f3 Bh5 is roughly equal and more importantly stops White from the usual set-up involving developing the king's knight to f3. While 5...Nc6 6 Nf3 Bg4 transposes to the main game. **5 Nf3 Bg4** (See Diagram)



The light-squared bishop is well placed here to pin the knight and help to inspire greater complications than in the ...Bf5 lines. If you want to play something a little bit different then

perhaps you should consider 5...Nc6 6 Nf3 and now 6...g6. For example: 7 Bb5 Bg7 8 Ne5 Qb6 (the queen is well placed here to defend the c6 knight) 9 Bg5 0-0 10 Bxc6 bxc6 11 Na4 Qc7 12 Nc5 Ne4! 13 Nxe4 (not 13 Bf4? that runs into Nxc5 14 Nxg6 e5 15 Nxf8 exf4 winning) 13...dxe4 14 Bf4 Qb6 15 b3 Rd8 16 c3 Ba6! (Black wisely stops White from castling kingside, which helps to increase the pressure on the stranded white king) 17 Qc2 c5 18 Qxe4 cxd4 19 Nc4 (if 19 c4 then Bb7 20 Qe2 d3 will help Black win material) 19...Bxc4 20 bxc4 dxc3 21 0-0 (White finally castles but by now he has a hopeless position) 21...Qd4 22 Qxd4 Rxd4 23 Bc1 Rxc4 24 Ba3 e6 0-1. **6 Bd3** Or 6 Bg5 e6 7 Bb5+ (it soon becomes clear that this is hardly a threat and there is no need to waste time with ...a7-a6) 7...Nc6 8 h3 Bh5 9 Bxc6+ bxc6 10 Qe2 Be7 11 a3 0-0 12 0-0-0?! (this is risky although 12 0-0 is well met by 12...Qb6) 12...Qa5 13 Bd2 Bxa3! gave Black a winning attack in Z.Benamani-S.Khoo, Oropesa del Mar 2001 World Junior Championship 2001. Also possible is 6 Bf4 a6 7 Be2 e6 8 0-0 Nc6 9 a3 Bxf3 10 Bxf3 Qb6 11 Re1 Qxd4 12 Nxd5 Nxd5 13 Bxd5? (a clear blunder considering that

White has the option of 13 Qxd4 Nxd4 14 Bxd5 Nxc2 15 Bxb7 Rd8 16 Bc7 with an edge) 13...Qxf4 finished off the game as a contest, D.Laugery-B.Norman, Mingara 2000. **6...Nc6** Yes, the threat is 7 ...Nxd4 and a few people have missed the idea according to my research! **7 Be3** Thalmann defends the d-pawn but already the pressure on the pinned king's knight gives Black more tactical opportunities than in your games with ...Bf5. **7...e6 8 h3 Bh5 9 Be2 Bd6** Black simply gets on with developing his pieces. **10 Qd2 a6 11 0-0-0** It seems to me that White is always running a risk in this line because Black can always put a rook on the half-open c-file to help accelerate an attack. **11...0-0 12 Bf4 Qc7 13 Bxd6 Qxd6 14 Rhe1 Bg6** The bishop has done its job of restricting White's mobility and now points towards the queenside. **15 Bd3 Bxd3 16 Qxd3 Nb4 17 Qe3 Rac8** A simple plan is to double rooks on the c-file. **18 a3 Nc6 19 Ne5 Rc7 20 Nxc6 Rxc6 21 g3 Rfc8 22 Re2** (See Diagram)

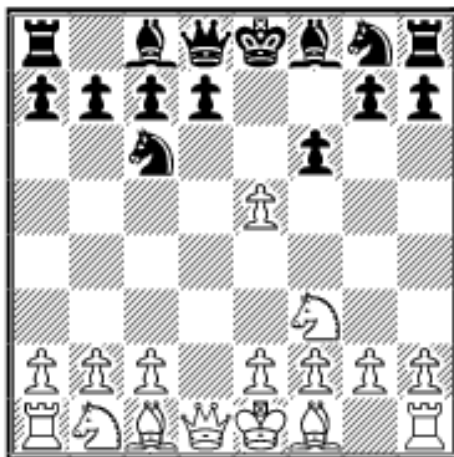


22... Rxc3! A decisive sacrifice that allows Black to create mayhem. **23 bxc3 Qxa3+ 24 Kd2 Ne4+ 25 Ke1 Qxc3+ 26 Kf1** Of course 26 Qxc3 Nxc3 forks the rooks. **26...Qxe3 27 Rxe3 Rxc2 28 Re2**

Rxe2 0-1

And finally, **Salim Djaffer** from **Algeria** is a fan of gambits and wants to know if there is a site

with games on a line that arises from the
 Englund Gambit upon 1 d4 e5 2 dxe5 Nc6 3 Nf3
 and now 3...f6 (See Diagram).



I have to admit that nothing springs to mind immediately but you never know what is lurking on the Internet. It has to be said that I rather like this gambit because it looks a lot of fun in blitz and is

some kind of reversed Blackmar-Diermer when you consider the line 1 d4 d5 2 e4 dxe4 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 f3. I would be pleased to hear from anyone who had had the courage to play this opening as Black.

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